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April 20, 1999 LB 637

SENATOR BOHLKE: Thank you, Mr. President and members. I hope that we can get to a vote quickly, and so my closing will be very brief. There's one thing that I would like to point out to you that's my understanding. I indicated that it was my understanding, if we would have passed LB 637, that Nebraska would still be sanctioned, and I believe that's probably true. However, there is something that we haven't discussed. Even if we would change and do something else, it wouldn't meet the federal requirements. If we would simply do the Bohlke amendment as it is before you, next January 1, 2000, we would get a letter saying Nebraska was going to be sanctioned. We then have an appeal time of 90 days, that's an entire session. Those sanctions are not retroactive, and those sanctions do not take place while it is under appeal. So the only thing that I take exception to was saying that we are acting irresponsibly by passing this amendment. I think, quite to the contrary, that by doing this it gives us an opportunity to have some conversations, to work some things out. And, in the end, it may be to say Nebraska is going to go for the waiver. And what is amazing to me, no matter what we do, we're going to be sanctioned next January 1. So, if that's true, let's at least state where we think Nebraska should be, and then during that appeals case we have the 90 days to make sure that we have a strong appeal. What we need to between now, I believe, and Select File is make sure that we are in the strongest possible position when we make that appeal. Now if that is not with the Bohlke amendment, if there are other things that need to be there in order to put Nebraska in a stronger appeal, certainly the issue brought forward by Senator Janssen, there may be other things, and we are on the phone, my office is on the phone right now with our representatives in Washington to have some conversations with them. And so I think that's a very good suggestion by Senator Baker, that this did not go unnoticed, that we are trying to act responsibly. But, as we have said over and over again, our main responsibility is to the women and the children who are so dependent on receiving these checks in the shortest amount of time possible, with the least amount of interference from government. I think the present system is superior to what we were looking at putting in place with LB 637. But we will continue to work, by the time we get to Select File, in bringing you back something that we hope will put Nebraska in a strong position. Thank you, everyone, for